



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

Epistle from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
of Friends. 1861

C
8330
310.78

C 8330.310.78

**HARVARD COLLEGE
LIBRARY**



**THE GIFT OF
HAVERFORD COLLEGE LIBRARY
HAVERFORD, PENNSYLVANIA**



Mr Richard Wood

EPISTLE

FROM THE

YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS,

HELD IN PHILADELPHIA,

BY ADJOURNMENTS FROM THE

15th of the Fourth Month to the 19th of the same, inclusive, 1861;

ADDRESSED TO ITS MEMBERS.

PHILADELPHIA:

TO BE HAD AT FRIENDS' BOOK STORE, 304 ARCH STREET.

C. SHERMAN & SON, PRINTERS.

1861.

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

EPISTLE

FROM THE

YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS,

HELD IN PHILADELPHIA,

BY ADJOURNMENTS FROM THE

15th-of the Fourth Month to the 19th of the same, inclusive, 1861;

ADDRESSED TO ITS MEMBERS.

PHILADELPHIA:

TO BE HAD AT FRIENDS' BOOK STORE, 304 ARCH STREET.

C. SHERMAN & SON, PRINTERS.

1861.

C 8330.310.78

✓

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
GIFT OF
HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
DEC 19 1939

EPISTLE FROM THE YEARLY MEETING OF
PHILADELPHIA TO ITS MEMBERS.

DEAR FRIENDS:

In this day of commotion in our country, when many are departing from the law of righteousness, and seeking to lay waste the peace and happiness of civil society, while others are striving, under various specious pretexts, to draw the unwary into things incompatible with our views of the spirituality of the religion of Christ, we feel engaged to address you in sympathy and brotherly love, in order, if we may be so favored, to strengthen your faith and allegiance to the God of our fathers, and your steadfastness in maintaining our Christian principles and testimonies, and to encourage you to put your trust in Him who has ever been the refuge and defence of the righteous in all their afflictions, as they have endeavored to do His will.

It has always been the belief of Friends, that our Religious Society was gathered by the Head of the Church, through the power of His Spirit operating upon the hearts of the members, to unite them in showing forth by precept and example, the pure and spiritual nature of the Gospel dispensation. Those who had experienced the washing of regeneration, and were baptized by one Spirit into one body, were

bound together in the love and fellowship of the Gospel, speaking the same language and minding the same thing. They denied self, bore the cross, followed their dear Redeemer in the way of His leading, and relied upon Him for the unfolding of His will, and for wisdom and strength to do it, both in their individual capacity and as His church. There has been no change in the doctrines and heavenly fruits of the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor in His gracious designs concerning His humble, faithful followers. He still leads them in humility and holiness, sustains them by the bread and water of life, dispensed by Himself to their souls, and as they obey Him, they grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God and of His dear Son. Those who pass through this administration of the Spirit and maintain their allegiance, will be grafted into Him as branches of the true Vine, and members of His spiritual body. They will severally receive gifts according to His will, to be occupied for His honor, the salvation of their own souls, and for the gathering of others to serve Him.

As they live and walk in the Truth, bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, they become lights in the world, and as a city set on a hill that cannot be hid, that others seeing their good works may glorify their Father which is in Heaven. It is only in continued watchfulness and prayer, serving the Lord, that any of us can be preserved from the temptations which surround us, and be instrumental in upholding the testimonies of this Gospel day, which Christ has

opened to us in the light, and required us to bear to the world.

Many sons and daughters in our Religious Society have been brought into this day, and been instrumental in spreading the truth as it is in Jesus, who died in the faith, leaving us an example that we should follow them as they followed Christ; walking by the same rule which made them honorable, and prepared them for an inheritance with the saints in light. Great is our responsibility for the multitude of the Lord's mercies and favors extended to us, and it remains to be the travail of the rightly exercised, that all the members of the Society may be quickened to a lively sense of their respective duties, and, turning the back upon the love of the world, enter more fervently into the work of their own salvation, and into a living concern for the dominion of Christ's kingdom among men.

The present is a period of much unsettlement in both civil and religious society. Many conflicting opinions on subjects of great importance, and affecting the highest interest of men, are pressed upon our notice with earnestness and plausibility. Where the natural inquisitiveness of the human mind is not regulated by the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit, it is liable to be drawn into reasoning upon religious truths, the tendency of which is to perplex and bewilder, to unsettle the mind in what it was once rightly established in the belief of, and thus to produce a state of doubt and dimness of spiritual vision, which expose it to the adoption of serious errors.

While laudably engaged in the proper cultivation of the intellectual powers, it becomes us to remember that there is a "knowledge which puffeth up," and that if we employ it, with the unaided and unsanctified mental faculties, in the investigation of religious truths, we shall be led astray. We believe the only place of safety, amid the peculiar trials and temptations of the present time, is in quiet inward retirement, and humble waiting upon the Lord. In the simple trust and ready obedience of little children, we shall not only be taught in the school of Christ those things that belong to our souls' peace, but receive strength, from time to time, to fulfil all the good pleasure of His will. In this state of reverent dependence upon God, a holy stability will gradually be attained, in which we shall not be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men," but shall be enabled, with magnanimity and firmness, to uphold those Christian principles and testimonies, which the adorable Head of the Church has called our Religious Society to show forth to the world.

Not only are we called to purity of life and conversation, but also to manifest our love to God and our dependence upon Him, by regularly assembling at our stated meetings, to worship Him "in spirit and in truth," waiting for instruction and Divine nourishment from the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Our Religious Society has been favored with clear openings into the inward spiritual worship, peculiar to this last and glorious dispensation, and through

faith in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, has been enabled to renounce all reliance upon man, his talents and learning, however great, and in the silence of all flesh to wait for the arising of the life and power of Truth in our religious assemblies; that we may know Christ to be in the midst, solemnizing our hearts, comforting us by his love, and enabling us to offer acceptable worship to the Father of spirits, and qualifying for the work of the ministry, as He sees fit to put forth in that service. Let us remember that we have a cunning, deceitful enemy, who would draw us away from a steadfast waiting for Christ, by presenting worldly cogitations, stupefy with a drowsy spirit, or, in the appearance of an angel of light, would kindle up a false heat, and lead us into acts which may flatter the creature, but, being destitute of the authority of Christ, we shall lie down in sorrow if given way to, and neither be benefited ourselves nor benefit others. It is our desire for Friends everywhere, that nothing may be permitted to alienate us from our simple mode of worship, but that through the Lord's goodness, and obedience to Him, we may not be ashamed of the cross, in patient silent waiting upon Him, but faithfully maintain our Christian testimony and practice herein.

In the teachings of our blessed Redeemer on Divine Worship it is observable that He prescribes no form nor outward act as necessary, but represents it as wholly a spiritual engagement. "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father

seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." It is important, then, we should constantly bear in mind, that according to the doctrine of Christ Himself, there can be no true worship but that which is performed in spirit and in truth, by each one for himself; and that though the most pleasing and exciting forms may be practised, or the most sound and well-prepared discourses are delivered, yet there may be no worship. They are but as sounding brass and as the tinkling cymbal, where the Spirit and the Truth are absent. It was the deep conviction of this important doctrine which led our first Friends to sit down in solemn silence, and endeavor to wait upon God, in order to experience a qualification from Him to perform this spiritual and acceptable worship.

When we consider how large a portion of professing Christians are taught to believe that the stated performance of a prescribed round of services, all dependent on the presence of one man for their efficiency, constitute worship, and that where there is no minister there is to be no worship; and contrast it with the teachings of our Lord, and the practice and precepts of holy men of old, we feel that it is especially incumbent upon us, faithfully and practically, to uphold the value and comfort of silent waiting upon, and worshipping God in spirit and in truth for the renewal of strength; that the whole company of true believers is a royal priesthood, a holy and peculiar people, each one of whom, in this

state of humble silent waiting, may have access unto God through Christ Jesus, our glorious Mediator; and without the intervention of any man, or a necessary dependence upon anything which one man can do for another, may offer up spiritual sacrifices, whether silent mental adoration, prayer, or praise, thanksgiving, or the public ministry of the word, as the Holy Spirit may direct, which will find acceptance with God through Christ Jesus. These noble Christian views of the precious privileges of the true believers in these Gospel days, having been unfolded to us as a people, great is our responsibility, and weighty the obligation which rests upon us, to uphold them in all their fulness and integrity, and not to suffer the love of show, the fascinations of melody, the itching ear, or a fondness for eloquence, to draw us into any act which would compromise or weaken our testimony.

We feel tenderly for our beloved Friends who meet weekly in very small companies, where religious meetings are generally held in silence, and who seldom are cheered by the visits of their concerned Friends. We doubt not that such often have their discouragements, and their faith at times may be closely proved. We would affectionately encourage them to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and lean upon Him alone, whose consoling language is, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, *there am I* in the midst of them." Dear Friends, strive earnestly to realize in yourselves this precious privilege, for if you have *Him*, what more can you desire?

To the humble and sincere worshippers, He will make Himself known as their Shepherd to feed them, their Prophet to teach them, and their compassionate High Priest to sympathize with them, and to present their spiritual offerings with the incense of His own intercession. Thus will your hearts be comforted, and the gracious promise be fulfilled in your experience: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

A pure Gospel ministry without money or price is of as great moment now in the Church of Christ as when he gave the injunction to the primitive ministers, "Freely ye have received, freely give." It is a testimony which our forefathers were called to revive and to uphold, and in maintaining it unflinchingly, they suffered great persecution. As Friends keep to the living Spring of all gospel ministry and worship, their example will tend to draw others to the teaching of the same Spirit of Truth in the heart, and to promote the spread of vital religion in the world. Let others do as they may, it is our duty to follow the Lord Jesus in the way which he casts up for us to walk in; and we believe that gratifying the curiosity in running to hear preachers who rely on their studies and learning to qualify them to deliver discourses, in the character of Gospel ministry, is a violation of our Christian principles, and unsettles, and may scatter, those members who give way to it.

Those who desire to shun the offence of the cross are assiduous in their efforts to bring into disesteem the testimony which our Religious Society has always

borne against the pride, luxury, changeable fashions, and insincere language and customs of the world. This Christian testimony has lost none of its value or of its obligation. It is founded on the declarations of Holy Scripture, and on the teachings of the Spirit of truth in the heart, by which many visited minds have been constrained to bow to its requirements, as the only path to substantial peace. Many are the instances in which it has proved as a hedge around the young and inexperienced, sheltering them from the assaults of the worldly-minded, and from corrupting and dangerous allurements; and as they have humbly submitted to the restraints and crosses which it occasioned, they have found them a salutary discipline, subduing the natural will and inclinations, and preparing the mind, in lowliness and docility, to receive further instruction in the way of life and salvation.

While we mourn over the departure of many from plainness of dress, manners, and language, we are comforted in the evidence that there is a body of Friends preserved who are conscientiously bound to this Christian duty, both in their own particulars and in the education of their children. Some may make light of this duty, but if we investigate the subject, we shall find that this concern, in our Religious Society, ever accompanies those who are walking in the Truth; and where parents discharge their duty in training their children conformably with the simplicity which the Truth leads into, standard-bearers are often raised up among them, and a blessing attends them, as it did the household of Obed-

edom, where the ark rested. A plain garb may be worn by those who have not the life and power of godliness ; but where this divine life and virtue rule in our members, such will feel constrained to show it in their attire, language, and humble walk in life. They will not be conformed to this world and the fashions of it, but will prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God concerning them in this and other respects. This is a subject which we would affectionately and fervently press upon all Friends, as we believe that if it is abandoned, and they go back into the habits and spirit of the world, they must lose, not only the appearance and character of real Friends, but also the influence we have had in the world, and finally cease to be the Society of Friends. We tenderly desire, in the feeling of affectionate interest, that our beloved young Friends may be willing patiently to bear the yoke, and to conform to the plain dress, to the Scripture language of thou and thee to a single person, the numerical distinction of the months and days of the week, to avoid the empty and unmeaning compliments and titles in fashionable use, and steadily adhere to the simple habits which have always distinguished consistent Friends ; in which we believe they will find safety and an ample reward.

Amidst the commotions which unhappily prevail in our favored country, and which we believe have their origin in the unsubjected will and passions of men, it is the privilege, and it should be the aim of every sincere Christian, to seek to be gathered into the quiet

habitation, out of the excitements of party spirit, and the jarring controversies which agitate the men of the world; where the mind can calmly repose in humble faith upon the assurance that "the Lord reigneth;" and that, however He may permit the people to rage and to imagine vain things, "He sitteth king upon the flood," and will not only cause "the wrath of man ultimately to praise Him," but "the remainder of wrath He will restrain."

How unspeakably precious to the dedicated followers of Christ is the promise, "I will be to them a little sanctuary in the places where they come." May it be our increasing concern, dear Friends, so to live in the daily fear of God, wherein is strong confidence, that in seasons of trial and shaking we may be favored to have Christ Jesus for our sanctuary and hiding-place; thus fulfilling the counsel given by our Society in early days, viz.: "All keep and walk in Christ Jesus, the sanctuary; for in Him are peace and safety. He destroys the destroyer, the enmity and the adversary. Christ is your sanctuary, in this day of storm and tempest, in whom you have rest and peace. Whatever storms or tempests arise, within or without, Christ your sanctuary is over them all, who has all power in heaven and earth, and none is able to pluck his lambs or sheep out of His Father's or His hand, who is the true Shepherd. Neither is any able to hurt a hair of your head, except it be permitted by His power for your trial. Therefore rejoice in His power, the Lamb of God, who hath the victory over all, both within and without." 1683.

We tenderly desire for our beloved young Friends that they may thus come unto Him, and be kept in a watchful retired state of mind, endeavoring to know their spirits daily seasoned with Divine grace and clothed with the meekness of heavenly wisdom. Thus will they be kept from having their attention unduly taken up, and their time and thoughts engrossed, with politics and political affairs. They will find that there are themes for contemplation, and objects upon which to employ their energies more noble and improving than these, which will not only yield them the calm enjoyment which is the present reward of doing good, but will also afford matter for peaceful retrospection in a future day.

Friends have ever believed civil government to be a Divine ordinance, and that active or passive obedience to the laws is an incumbent duty. While holding these views, we wish also to encourage and to strengthen our members faithfully and firmly to uphold the plain Scripture testimony against all wars and fightings, whatever it may cost them; and to be on their guard how they strike hands with those whose spirit and actions are in direct opposition to it; or advocate a policy which, if carried out, may end in strife, and possibly in bloodshed. Consistency is not only an invaluable ornament of the Christian life, but it cogently recommends it to others; and we are enjoined by inspired authority so to walk, that others, "beholding our good works, may glorify God in the day of visitation."

It was the testimony of that honorable elder,

George Fox, respecting himself and his fellow-believers: "We are nothing—Christ is all;" and to every true Christian the Lord Jesus is still the All in all; the Alpha and Omega in the work of salvation. While mankind were lost in sin and without strength, in due time He died for us, that we might be saved. Through the Eternal Spirit He offered himself without spot unto God, a sacrifice and propitiation for our sins; and He now comes into our hearts by the visitations of the same Spirit, to awaken us from spiritual death, and to give us light to see our lost estate and the exceeding sinfulness of our sin. As we turn unto Him, in faith and obedience, enduring all the dispensation of condemnation, we receive the gift of repentance, and through the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire the heart is purged, the chaff consumed, a new life unto righteousness is created in us, and all our past transgressions are forgiven and done away for Jesus Christ's sake. It is only by the cleansing operations of this inward baptism that we can experience that thorough change of heart which makes us partakers of the great salvation He purchased for us; and without this baptism, our profession of faith in Him will prove unavailing.

If we desire to have a solid hope of being found among the number of Christ's companions, we must receive Him into our hearts and submit to the government of His Spirit there, by which the loftiness of man is laid low, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are done away; His yoke and cross laid upon the natural will and inclinations,

and the soul daily conformed to the example of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

We desire, earnestly and affectionately, to press upon our beloved Friends the vast importance of striving diligently to experience this inward heart-changing religion, in which Christ will be made unto them of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and perfect redemption; and not to rest in an outside profession, in a compliance with the duties of morality, or in the most active and enlarged benevolence. These, excellent as they are, will, without the inward work, be found to be short of the mark for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Our worthy predecessors saw in the Divine light that the dependence on outward rites and ceremonies that had crept into the professing Christian churches in the night of apostasy, obscured the brightness and purity of the spiritual religion introduced by our blessed Lord; and which, as confessors of his name and believers in his power as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, they were bound to show forth. They were convinced that the Holy Scriptures nowhere enjoined any of those ceremonies as of lasting obligation; and they were faithful in upholding the completeness of Christ's religion as a spiritual work without them. Those among us who in any wise turn back to the ceremonies and forms out of which Friends were thus divinely led, so far as their example may have influence, are obscuring the light we are called to hold up to others, balking

our testimony to the Lord Jesus as the alone and all-sufficient Saviour, and leading back into bondage to rites dependent upon and performed by man, as necessary to salvation.

Our standing is one of great seriousness, and it becomes each one honestly to inquire how far he is living up to the measure of Divine light with which we are favored, and fulfilling the high and important trust committed to us as Friends. If we have known the blessed efficacy of the one saving baptism of the Spirit, even "the answer in us of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," our souls will be nourished and strengthened by that spiritual communion with Him which he promised, when he said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Thus, coming to partake of the living heavenly substance, we shall have no desire for the shadows, which cannot nourish the life of God in the soul.

Here there will be no disposition to pry into things beyond our religious growth, nor to resort to book-learned commentators, or to humanly taught and critical expounders of Holy Scripture, to explain the mysteries of salvation, which remain to be hid from the wise and prudent; but, keeping at the feet of Christ, and humbly waiting as little children to be instructed by Him, who still teacheth as never man taught, He will unfold to the mind such things as He sees are necessary for it to know, fulfilling in its ex-

perience that precious promise made to his Church: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children; in righteousness shalt thou be established."

Finally, beloved brethren and sisters, of every age and class, let us all more and more earnestly seek to be clothed with the humility, the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and to have our hearts and all our actions imbued with that love which is "the bond of perfectness," and will endure forever. This will make us kind to one another, tender-hearted, forbearing, and forgiving one another, even as our heavenly Father has long borne with us and forgiven us for Christ's sake. Everything that would hurt, or rend, or divide, will then be carefully avoided, the natural brittleness of our spirits will be softened and subdued; and watching over ourselves first, and over others for good, it will be our living travail and concern that, through the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the body may be more and more closely knit together in Christ, "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Thus the blessed design of religious association will be answered, which is the mutual encouragement, help, and strength of the members, in their heavenward pilgrimage; endeavoring to cheer and animate one another in pressing after entire dedication of heart to the Lord; to comfort the afflicted, support the feeble-minded, and to revive the drooping spirit, bearing one another's burdens; and, when necessary, speaking in tenderness a word of counsel,

admonition, or reproof; and all done under the leadings of the good Shepherd, as members one of another, and of His body; answering the glorious end for which He, the ever adorable Head, prayed: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. That they all may be one as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me."

We trust it is under the influence of a measure of this love that we cordially salute our dear Friends, and bid them an affectionate farewell; desiring that the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make us all perfect in every good work to do His will; working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Signed on behalf and by direction of the Yearly Meeting aforesaid;

WILLIAM EVANS,

Clerk this Year.





C 8330.310.78
Epistle from the Yearly Meeting of
Widener Library 003197800



3 2044 081 815 243